

Today's Lifestyles Drive Trends

By Carol Lamkins, CID, CMKBD

The way in which we design living space is driven by the dictates of society and our lifestyle. People are looking for beautiful open spaces that can accommodate casual seating for many. Formal dining rooms are being eliminated in favor of an open kitchen plan with a large gathering table and additional seating at an island or peninsula. This has led to a great room replacing the “parlor” or formal living room to include sitting, dining, kitchen and other activities. Sometimes this room is referred to as a “Family Studio”. These multifunctional rooms are becoming commonplace as family life grows busier. Here are some examples of how these rooms function:

- The functions of laundry rooms, offices, and kitchens are now becoming open-flow combo rooms so that everyone can congregate and work in one place.
- Increased counter space in kitchens and adjacent spaces serve to accommodate several people working at the same time.
- Specific areas are being designated for diverse activities such as an island for homework, counter for preparing food or multiple islands – one for preparing food and one for entertaining.
- Often one side of the kitchen is being treated as a “work” area and the other side is treated as a connecting element between the kitchen and family room.
- Computer areas, recharging stations and large TV monitors are becoming commonplace in the kitchen.



Courtesy of Mullet Cabinet



Courtesy of Merit Kitchens

Consumers are looking for practical and durable design and products that reflect an extension of self. Their preference has changed from traditional kitchens to open plan kitchens. New styles, materials and décor are at the top of their list. They expect the kitchen to be functional in an expandable, contractible fashion based upon the number of people using the space simultaneously. On top of that, the final expectation is the “wow” factor with enduring style.

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Embellishments in the kitchen have evolved into a reflection of the homeowner's personality, with designers incorporating intricate details such as mosaic flooring and ceilings, and textured paints. Colorful accent pieces and other accoutrements including collectibles and antiques, are also making an appearance in a growing number of kitchens. These pieces are arranged to suggest art versus clutter.

The luxury kitchen reflects sophisticated design and includes state-of-the-art appliances that may take the form of multiple mix-and-match modular units. Many of these modular units come in drawer configurations such as refrigeration, microwave ovens, dishwashers and warming units positioned at point-of-first-use locations. Drawer appliances are increasing in popularity due to their ability to break up the big expanses of large appliances and cut the clutter. They also provide a more customized, high-tech feel because they shatter the paradigm that has been associated with these large units for so long.

Clients who are discerning gourmets will require a combination of utility and style in their kitchen. Professional grade residential appliances are in demand, such as dual fuel ranges and gas rangetops coupled with electric convection ovens that provide superior baking. Controlled storage for delicate items, adjustable interiors, and hygienic food storage features are among the demands for refrigeration appliances. Healthy food preparation lends itself to refrigerators with larger crisper drawers and longer food preservation capabilities.



Courtesy of U-Line



Courtesy of U-Line

Double dishwashers have been added if space allows. They make a huge difference for larger families and when entertaining. Built-in wine/beverage refrigerators are high on the list. There is a return in the popularity of wall ovens with the one oven functioning as a turbo oven. This allows for multiple cooking options, including baking, rotisserie and rapid-dinner preparation.

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The commercial-look of stainless steel or integrated appliances that blend in with cabinetry is the standard. Here are some methods of how appliances can be integrated:

1. Overlay/Face Frame - This is a standard 24" deep base cabinet with a face frame structure that supports doors and drawers that close onto the face of the frame. The overall depth from the front of the cabinet door or drawer to the back of the base cabinet is approximately 24-3/4" deep.
2. Inset - This is a 24" deep base cabinet with doors and drawers that close within the frame. The overall depth from the front of the cabinet door or drawer to the back of the base cabinet is 24" deep.
3. Integration: European / Frameless - A 24" deep base cabinet with no visible frame structure on the outer face of the cabinet. Doors and drawers fully cover the face frame area of the cabinet case and have minimal reveals or gaps between doors and drawers. The overall depth from the front of the cabinet door or drawer to the back of the base cabinet is 24-3/4" deep.



Courtesy of U-Line – Overlay/Face Frame



Courtesy of U-Line - Inset



Courtesy of U-Line – European/Frameless

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Consumers are asking for “smart” storage that reduces clutter and customizes cabinetry to store needed items within arm’s reach. For example, store pots and pans next to the range, create vertical cabinets for baking sheets and cooling racks next to double-wall ovens, choose stepped shelves in the pantry to make finding food a snap and add recycling and trash stations inside cabinetry to save space and create a cleaner look.

“Smart” storage segues into an international influence that is being felt in our home as we lean towards simpler, clutter-free environments. This trend is aimed at simpler and more sophisticated aesthetics.



Courtesy of U-Line

Also supporting this trend, contemporary and very modern-looking kitchens are showing up all over the country. Even traditional kitchens are becoming cleaner and less ornate and incorporate built-in appliances often found in international designs.



Courtesy of U-Line

Greater acceptance of a more component-like approach to the kitchen has gained popularity. Materials are mixed, to create a custom-styled, versatile space. Open shelving with multiple cabinet styles and finishes can be paired with several countertop surfaces and backsplashes to create a zoned kitchen for cooking, office, etc.

The trend toward green is influencing energy efficient appliances and the choice of environmentally friendly materials. Homeowners want sustainable, renewable and eco-friendly resources used in their home. This trend leads to increased marketplace visibility of recycled-glass products, cast-stone products

made from recycled marble and limestone, and renewable woods like eucalyptus and bamboo. Energy saving options include renewable counter top materials, magnetic induction cooktops, hidden recycle and compost stations and self-healing cork flooring.

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LED is the popular energy efficient light used in under cabinet lighting as well as in pendants and semi-flush fixtures. LED lamps do not use energy to produce excessive heat, compared to halogen lamps. These lamps also do not emit ultraviolet light that can damage and fade fabrics, surfaces and woods.



Courtesy of U-Line



Courtesy of U-Line



Courtesy of U-Line

New design trends are bringing together beauty and function. Appliances and other functional pieces are becoming works of art. New materials and lots of glass are turning kitchens into indoor sculptural spaces with appliance placement being the only thing that betrays the appliances' true function. Custom material in backsplashes and cabinet doors are adding personality to the kitchen. Choices can be made between refrigerator doors that are stainless steel for a sleek, modern look or wood paneling for a timeless feel. Color is making a comeback, with gas ranges being sold in vibrant hues like terracotta, blue water and slate green. Decorative

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range hoods can be camouflaged to blend right into the kitchen décor.

Materials including crystallized glass, terrazzo, and quartz are replacing traditional granite surfaces. Softer, less vein and patterned materials are being used. More emphasis is being placed on material quality rather than big size, high cost and quantity.

The Asian accents are bringing tranquility to the kitchen. While the kitchen is the hub, and therefore the busiest room in the home, the Asian-influenced details are bringing a Zen-like quality to the space which can help radiate throughout the home. Japanese inspired sliding doors for pantries and cabinets and built-in teriyaki grills are showing up more frequently.

Straight lines and right angles still have their appeal, but organic and ergonomic shapes are on their way in. Especially true for the kitchen and bathroom, rounded edges and flowing lines breath a new life into the home. The sculptural, playful look adds personality and makes for an inviting environment. No more sharp corners to bump into.



Courtesy of U-Line



Courtesy of U-Line



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Courtesy of U-Line

Advances in technology continue to offer out-of-this-world options, including refrigerators with alarms and/or built-in televisions. Electronic features allowing personalized temperature settings or the ability to set blackout or Sabbath modes. Built-in coffee machines and ice makers add that custom touch where counter space or freezer space is limited. Pre-programming appliances to turn on at a set time has been around for many years. It will soon be commonplace to remotely start appliances by connecting with phone, email or text before you arrive home.

Engineers are even working on the ultimate multipurpose appliance that reads the food producers cooking instructions from the label, refrigerates the food until remotely instructed to begin the cooking process. The mode will change from refrigeration to cooking as the homeowner travels home. This is a far cry from the labor intensive processes for preparing meals 100 years ago!

The National Kitchen and Bath Association (NKBA) surveyed its members to determine the top annual trends in specific products. Here's what they discovered for 2012:



Courtesy of Welborn Cabinet , Inc

1. Cherry wood is in decline.

Cherry wood has consistently been the first or second most popular type of wood for cabinetry, jockeying for the top spot with maple each year. However, designers are slowly shifting away from it.

While 80 percent of NKBA member kitchen designers had recently specified cherry cabinetry as 2010 approached, that figure dropped to 72 percent last year and fell again to 69 percent heading into 2012.

No one other wood species is taking that market share on its own, as even maple dropped in popularity this year, falling from 77 percent last year to 70 percent now. Instead, a number of lesser-used woods are being specified more often, including oak, which is specified by twice as many designers now (22 percent) versus two years ago (11 percent); walnut, which has increased from 3 percent in 2010 to 9 percent in 2011 to 13 percent today; birch, which is now specified

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by three times as many kitchen designers as it was a year ago (15 percent vs. 5 percent), and bamboo, which has doubled from 5 percent last year to 10 percent now. While alder is currently specified by 27 percent of kitchen designers, that figure is down from 30 percent last year and from 40 percent two years ago.

2. Darker finishes

Natural kitchen cabinetry continues a steady move toward darker finishes. While light natural finishes have been recently specified by 30 percent of kitchen designers, medium natural finishes stand at 55 percent, with dark natural finishes at 58 percent. Two years ago, dark natural finishes were specified by only 43 percent of designers. Among painted cabinetry, white continues to be the most popular option, as white cabinets have been recently specified by 59 percent of NKBA member kitchen designers, while other colors were specified by only 38 percent of designers.



Courtesy of Poggenpohl

Another trend to note is that distressed finishes are making a comeback. After being recently specified by 15 percent of designers going into 2010, that figure dropped to just 5 percent last year, but has now risen to 22 percent.

3. Glass backsplashes



Courtesy of ThinkGlass

Although glass remains a niche material for kitchen countertops, it's been recently used by more than half of kitchen designers as a backsplash material, rising from 41 percent a year ago to 52 percent now. This trails only natural stone tile at 60 percent and ceramic tile (including porcelain), which has been specified of late by some 74 percent of designers. Even at that high rate, ceramic tile backsplashes are on the decline, as they stood at 78 percent a year ago and 88 percent two years ago. Other popular backsplash materials are granite at 30 percent and quartz at 20 percent.

The popularity of these materials as backsplashes is due to their high use as countertop materials. Finishing off a granite or quartz countertop with a matching backsplash is quite common; however, the same doesn't hold true for solid surfaces. While these materials are very popular for countertops, they're seldom used for backsplashes, as they're specified by just 11 percent of designers.

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4. LED lighting

Energy-efficiency is clearly not a fad, but a real trend that can be seen taking hold in homes across the United States and Canada. Despite the higher initial cost, light-emitting diode, or LED, lighting is proof of this trend. Specified by 50 percent of NKBA member kitchen designers entering 2010, that rate increased to 54 percent the following year and has jumped over the past year to 70 percent. However, compact fluorescent lights (CFLs) are not on the same trajectory.

Although CFLs use roughly a quarter the energy of an incandescent lamp when producing the same amount of light measured in lumens, the poor color of the light they produce and the presence of mercury in these lamps are keeping them out of newly remodeled kitchens, falling from 36 percent last year to 26 percent today.

Older incandescent lamps stand at just 42 percent, a figure we expect to fall next year due in part to the U.S. ban on newly produced 100-watt incandescent lamps that went into effect on Jan. 1, 2012. A ban on 75-watt incandescent lamps will go into effect on Jan. 1, 2013, followed by 60- and 40-watt incandescent lamps on Jan. 1, 2014.



Courtesy of Lutron



Courtesy of ROHL

Pull-out faucets

Pull-out kitchen faucets have become established as the dominant type of kitchen faucet. Designers are increasingly eschewing the standard faucet with a detached side spray in favor of pull-out models that integrate the two functions into a single unit. Viewing the large number of new pull-out faucet models at the NKBA's Kitchen & Bath Industry Show, it is clear these units can be seamlessly incorporated into almost any kitchen design style.

While standard kitchen faucets were specified by just under half of designers as 2010 approached, barely more than a third of designers have recently specified them.

Meanwhile, the use of pull-out faucets has increased from 88 percent to 91 percent to 93 percent. In other words, 14 of out every 15 designers who designed a kitchen over the final three months of 2011 incorporated a pull-out faucet. These versatile models might also be mitigating the need for pot-filler faucets, which have been recently specified by just 28 percent of designers, down from 41 percent two years ago.

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Today the kitchen has evolved to reflect lifestyle and accommodate the family's daily needs. Kitchens are not only recognized as the heart of the home, but also quite often as the focal point and centerpiece for gathering. Successful design in 2012 reflects the need to have multi-functional, streamlined, open workspaces in the kitchen, practical and durable products, modular energy-efficient appliances, "smart" storage and eco-friendly components.



Courtesy of Pedini

RESOURCES:

www.u-line.com

www.homeportfolio.com

<http://www.sheknows.com>

<http://info.stantonhomes.com>

www.nkba.org